

SAN DIEGO CALIFORNIA EXAMINER

THE LARGEST FILIPINO-AMERICAN NEWSPAPER IN THE U.S.A.

Distributed in Major Outlets in San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Chicago. Other Major American cities by subscription

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

AUG. 30- SEPT. 5, 2002



BALITANG BETERANO

By Col. Frank B. Quesada

'SSI'vets coming back to the US

(First of Two Parts)

Reports from the different chapters and affiliates of the National Advisory Council of Fil-Am WWII Veterans USA (the junta of the Office of Veterans Affairs and the official lobby for the claims and benefits of the total surviving 60,000 Fil-Am WWII veterans) states that, "veterans and their families who returned to the Philippines under SSI are fast coming back here in the US, for relief."

Source of complaints

Why? The so-called SSI veterans cashiered by fast-talking novice advocates compromised the Fil-Am WWII veterans without the sanction of the preponderant majority, and the Office of the Veterans Affairs. The misadventure of the promoters has now backfired against those who were misled to return to and reside in the Philippines under reduced SSI (25% less) grant, and without Medicare.

This happened because the law passed last December 17, 1999, entitled Fil-Am veterans a reduced SSI by 25% less, if they opt to return to the Philippines. Their wives automatically lose their individual SSI check, and their Medicare.

Agonizing bad experiences

These veterans upon reaching the Philippines have experienced the most agonizing, unimaginable and extreme disappointment — not to leave out the money lost, and the great risk they have taken in believing the hype of a good life in the Philippines under cut-rate SSI.

According to one of the victims, "It was death warrant for me in the Philippines without a Medicare. I was made to understand by those who sold me the idea of opting to return there without

Medicare, and with the SSI would afford me to have a heyday of my life with the equivalent of P15,000. It was indeed a hype and was a brazen lie. My life was in jeopardy." *Aftermath of misrepresentation*

This fiasco happened which was cashiered by reported self-appointed advocates claiming expertise in legislative lobby, but in fact, have recently been rebuked by no less than Rep. B. Filner in Washington D.C. for "not knowing what they were doing".

SSI - Not a veteran's benefit

The SSI grant, in the first place, was not a genuine veterans benefit. It proved to be a worthless guile sold to innocent and naive veterans, easily misled by promoters.

What Fil-Am veterans of WWII want is equality of benefits same as their comrades in the US Army, they earned in battle.

Those who recently arrived from the Philippines have related their harrowing experiences, with practically nothing under the said two-faced social security benefit. In reality, the law only afforded savings for the US government, at the expense of marginalized veterans under reduced grants. It turned out to be another hype.

Harrowing experiences

One of the members of the council who opted to return to the Philippines suddenly caught catastrophic illness, thus checked in a local hospital. His hospital bill rose to P800,000 within two weeks of confinement, that rendered him hapless in meeting the expenses. Unfortunately, he passed away without capacity to pay the hospital. His P15,000 equivalent of the

SSI from the US was so puny—that hastened his death.

Attempt to reinstate SSI

An array of these victims of unfortunate incidents have related their hurt, who were beguiled under the SSI hype. They are now back here in the US trying to reinstate their former status as SSI recipients, if they can.

One outstanding case was about a veteran, who, after declaring his assets and countable income, his SSI was drastically reduced to only \$8.00 per month. Nothing was practically left.

Then, there was another veteran who passed away even before he could receive his deluding inequitable grant. When such law was passed, he was in the Philippines, thus excluded him as a bonafide recipient. He died without anything and a victim of a dreadful scam.

Numbers of those who opted

The much brandied SSI, reported by the Social Security Administration, had no less than 7,160 who opted to take advantage of the said law, but a few of them returned to the Philippines. Promoters of this grant have boasted that 14,000 Fil-Am WWII veterans residing in the US would return to the Philippines and would live in style in the Philippines. But in reality, the hype promoted have created a hoax.

The SSA further reported that some 3,4000 out of those who inquired about the SSI actually applied for benefit. Only 2,000 applications have been approved. But less than that did not leave after realizing what they have to lose, and the risk they would take upon leaving the US.